

CLAIMS OF THE INVENTION

I CLAIM:

1. A bonus system associated with a gaming system including at least one gaming device, the gaming device arranged to present at least one game for play thereon, comprising:

a player tracking device associated with said gaming device, said player tracking device including a card reader, a keypad, and at least one display, said player tracking device configured to receive information regarding said gaming device;

a player tracking host arranged to store data regarding activities of one or more players of said gaming device;

a communications link between said player tracking device and said player tracking host over which information is transmitted; and

a bonus system host, said bonus system host arranged to generate information regarding a bonus event and transmit said bonus event information over at least a portion of said communications link to said player tracking device, and wherein said player tracking device is arranged to display information regarding a bonus event on said at least one display.

2. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said player tracking device includes a player tracking controller located at said gaming device, said player tracking controller adapted to execute bonus event instructions received from said bonus system host.

3. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said communications link comprises a portion of a communication network.

4. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 3 wherein a plurality of player tracking hosts associated with differing gaming devices are associated with said host.

5. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said bonus system is adapted to generate information regarding a bonus event independent of the outcome of games presented on said gaming device.

6. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 1 wherein said player tracking device includes at least one speaker, said player tracking device arranged to present audible bonus information in response to bonus event information from said bonus host.

7. The bonus system in accordance with Claim 1 including a top box mounted upon a housing of said gaming device, said top box supporting at least a portion of said player tracking device.

8. A method of awarding a bonus to a player of a gaming machine comprising:
providing a player tracking device associated with said gaming machine, said player tracking device including a player tracking device controller and at least one peripheral, said at least one peripheral selected from the group consisting of a card reader, display, printer, keyboard and speaker, a player tracking host located remote from said player tracking device, and a player tracking network including one or more communications links permitting transmission of information to and from said player tracking device and player tracking host, and a bonus host associated with said network;

configuring bonus event information;
transmitting said bonus event information from said bonus host to said player tracking device
over said player tracking network; and
presenting a bonus event at said gaming machine with said player tracking device.

9. The method in accordance with Claim 8 wherein said bonus event information is transmitted in response to an indication of a player playing said gaming machine.

10. The method in accordance with Claim 9 wherein said indication comprises the transmission of player identification information from said player tracking device.

11. The method in accordance with Claim 8 wherein said step of presenting a bonus event comprises providing an indication that a bonus has been awarded.

12. The method in accordance with Claim 11 wherein said step of providing an indication comprises generating audible and visible information.

13. The method in accordance with Claim 8 including the step of transmitting bonus event award information from said bonus host to said player tracking device.

14. The method in accordance with Claim 8 including the step of transmitting bonus event award information from said bonus host to said player tracking host.

15. The method in accordance with Claim 14 wherein said transmitted bonus event award information comprises credit information.

16. A method of awarding a bonus which is associated with a gaming machine comprising:

determining that said gaming machine is not being played by a player;

transmitting bonus event information to said gaming machine;

displaying information regarding said bonus event;

accepting information regarding an identity of a player; and

awarding a bonus to said player.

17. The method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said step of accepting information regarding an identity of a player comprises reading information from a player tracking card.

18. The method in accordance with Claim 16 wherein said step of displaying information regarding said bonus event comprises displaying instructions regarding how to win said bonus.